PANCHAYATI RAJ

(Incorporating Gram Sevak)

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ASADHA-SRAVANA 1882

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Our Monthly letter to Peasants and Villagers of India—4

New Delhi
July 16, 1960.

Dear Friend,

YOUR EDITOR insisted on an early message from me for you after the conferences at Srinagar nearly a month ago. I rushed through and complied. Imagine my surprise to discover today the 16th of July that the June issue of the journal is still in the press. I know, the Editor will be justified to complain against the press. I suppose, the press also will be justified to complain against the Editor or somebody else. Thus will they cancel each other. We must agree, no body is to blame. But the fact remains, your journal is late in reaching you. The message I rushed to convey to you is already cold and out-of-date. Perhaps you and I are alone to blame.

The Government organisation has grown to be an octopus. Do you know what an octopus is ? It is an animal in the sea which has many a tentacle. These spread far and wide to entangle its victims. The Government organisation has grown not merely big in size; it has also developed fat. When there is excess of fat, muscles cannot act as fast they should. In the end, the man with excess fat finds it difficult to breathe. He develops all kinds of chronic ailments which no doctor can cure. He usually dies of heart failure long before his prime. Our Government in India is developing all the symptoms of an over-corpulent glutton. People have begun surrendering all their responsibilities to government one by one. How is a government ever to attempt meeting such demands except through fresher and longer tentacles ?

TOO FAT

Today, Government of India is the Government of the people. If the Government suffers, people suffer in the end. The buildings which house the Government offices may remain intact. But that will not help the people. The democracy of which we are proud today may itself get lost in the process. What will happen thereafter, we are not able to predict. If the Government is to survive, it has to remain active and alert, and be effective in operation. For this, it is necessary that the Government consists only of essential people who will give back a hundred Naya Paisa for a rupee earned. Fat should then be a forbidden commodity in Government. We can secure this if the people do their job from the family upwards and leave the Government to do only what they cannot do themselves.

The State Governments and the Centre are very big Governments in India considering the size of our territories and of our population. These Governments should look after basic policies, National and State planning, and provide high level guidance to the people. If the Centre and the States are to do these functions effectively, they must be relieved of smaller jobs which otherwise would occupy the bulk of their time. A good cook, you will agree will fail to produce the dishes if he has also to do the marketing, the preparation of the vegetables and the grinding of the masallas. He can only do fault finding and look for excuses. Even in a big family, the major responsibility for cooking falls on the woman who is the most adept in cooking. The task of doing the associated jobs falls on the other members of the household, to each one according to capacity.

We wish the Centre and the States to serve the country in a big way and effectively. The Government decreed accordingly that there should be Panchayati Raj. Our village people constitute 82 per cent of India's population. Panchayati Raj demands that people will look after their local needs at Village, Block and District levels. If this is done, State and Central Governments can use their resources to help people with higher forms of assistance. Even God does

not wish man to be too dependent on Him. There is, as you know, a common saying "God helps those who help themselves". Our Government, we know, is eager to see people rely more on themselves. Our people ache to share power with Government. What is then holding up Panchayati Raj from spreading fast in this subcontinent ?

THE ROAD BLOCK

The biggest road-block on this we discover, is the unwillingness of people to shoulder the burden of managing their own affairs. They have little experience in self-management. They feel reluctant to go through the training and education for the new task assigned to them. Many a Government servant in the past ruled the people instead of serving them. With powers vested in them for service, they extorted of the people privileges for themselves. This had been the normal symbol of State power as we knew it in the rural areas. When power is given now to the people, it is no wonder they desire first to test out if it is genuine or counterfeit. The easiest way out they find, is to use it the same way as many a Government servant did in the past on the people. They try this on their neighbours or on the Government servants placed in their charge. People then begin to detest the Panchayats. Government servants also begin to resist them, secretly or in the open. These are the difficulties. How do we overcome them ? This is the most crucial question that faces you, me and our co-workers all along the line.

After leaving my message for you of the last month with the Editor, I left for a long tour in the South. Delhi, as you know, is a big city. The city is spreading fast with the expansion of Government offices and quarters, thanks to your forbearance and generosity. Villages around are disappearing like magic. We naturally produce a lot of foodgrains on paper in own offices in Delhi. We tend to do rural development work in the same way. I have, therefore, been anxious throughout to get out into the villages. There is no better way of knowing what our people are really thinking and how their problems can be met. I had dashed accordingly on a long programme of tour to the South. In the middle of it, I had to rush back to Delhi because there was a threatened strike all over India. The strike is already on.* Instead of doing work in the villages, I am doing work now on paper in Delhi. Since paper is all I can use here, I thought I should use some of it for exchanging my thoughts and worries with you.

THE STRIKE

The strike is on because it is said that the lower categories of Government servants in India are not being cared well enough for by our Government. No one seems to be bothered about how the millions on whom the Government servants themselves are riding, are faring. None of these benefactors of humanity seems to bother what minimum earnings should be of a farmer, a craftsman or an artisan who battles against the weather, the harshness of the official routine, the lethargy and indifference of those who are paid to serve him. It does not seem to strike any one of these altruist leaders that the lowest paid Government servant in India today, say a peon, earns significantly more, plus the privileges, than at least 80% of rural and 60% of urban population. But reason does not prevail when unruly elements in society get the upper hand and decide to create chaos for Government because Government is not prepared, and cannot afford, to be held to ransom.

We talk now of the Third Five Year Plan. It is a gigantic one. We talk of the imperative urgency for tightening our belts. We wish to save today so that our children tomorrow may not have to suffer the pangs of poverty which corrode us. How can we do all this if pseudo-leaders misguide workers in Government and elsewhere ? How do we carry on life if loyal workers and others who refuse to be misguided are prevented from working and if there is sabotage of Government properties which belong to the people ? In all these happenings, we are losing more than a crore of rupees a day in the net result, because of the stoppage of work by the employees and interference

*This was written on July 16, 1960.

with trade and movement. People's morale suffers. Our prestige goes down in the eyes of people abroad, who are eager to help us if only we are willing to help ourselves.

Does any one talk of the millions that slog, sweat and starve in the countryside? Not at all. The over-fed gentries who have more energies, because of the food they consume, than they know how to utilise, go out like somnambulists to disturb others. An epidemic is rising in India from the gentlemen-at-large who refuse to think of the millions on whose shoulders they ride. If things move like this not even God will prevent the chaos that must follow inevitably. For brigands and others in allied pursuits, chaos offers the most promising carnival. But alas, all costs and sufferings seem through sheer gravity to get debited to the people residing in our 550 thousand and odd villages. Are you prepared to continue being the beast of burden to these somnambulists who suffer the gripe of indigestion and non-assimilation?

This letter will reach you in cold print long after the present heat is dissipated in the air. Government is strong enough today to defend you and your interests against anti-social elements. Will it continue so tomorrow? Whether it will or not will be determined by how you proceed with the care of the tender sapling of Panchayati Raj which shivers in the wind at your back-yard. Will you awake and stand up for your survival?

From a farmer's son.

FROM THE STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

The Andhra Pradesh Government has decided to transfer the activities of the Social Welfare Department and the control of minor irrigation sources to Zila Parishads from July 1. The minor irrigation sources are at present controlled by the Board of Revenue.

* * * *

A further expansion of the Guntakal Cooperative Spinning Mill has been approved by the Andhra Pradesh Government. The Mill has at present a spindle strength of 16,000 which is to be increased by the installation of an additional 3,500 spindles. When expanded, the monthly production will go up from 750 bales of 20s count to 900 bales. The Mill, which was the first of its kind to be started in the erstwhile Andhra was designed for a total number of 22,000 spindles.

* * * *

A pilot scheme for agricultural credit in twenty Samiti Blocks at the rate of ten villages in each Block is being launched by the Andhra Pradesh Government under the scheme. Each village will prepare an agricultural production programme on the basis of (i) full utilisation of irrigation facilities including maintenance of field channels in good condition by the beneficiaries; (ii) multiplication in the village of the approved seeds and the supply in kind to those who are not in a position to pay in advance; (iii) adequate supply of fertilisers; (iv) adequate provision of compost and green manures in the village; and (v) contour bunding.

The village agricultural production programme is to be linked with cooperative marketing. Central Banks will advance adequate short-term and medium-term credit to the village cooperative societies on the basis of the production programme and other relevant factors, more especially advance for approved seeds and fertilisers.

BOMBAY

The Bombay Government has decided to make use of various forms of entertainments such as ballad singing, Hari-kathas, kirtans, bhajans, dramas, etc. as media for promoting a well-informed and constructive attitude towards the developmental activities. Under this scheme, experienced ballad singers, kirtankars, kala-pathaks, drama artists, etc. will be employed for the purpose of popularising the ideas of community development in villages through songs and bhajans specially composed for the purpose.

DELHI

A well-equipped auditorium has been built in Alipur Development Block in Delhi. Twice a week hundreds of villagers flock to the new

auditorium to see plays, to listen to radio programmes and to sing and dance as only villagers can. Films and documentaries are also screened occasionally. The auditorium, 42 feet by 18 feet, is yet to get power. A sum of Rs. 2,300 was spent on equipping the auditorium with a stage, a green room and allied parapharnelia. In the auditorium, as also at various social education centres in the villages in the block, the Radio Rural Forums are conducted regularly. Each forum consists of 15 to 20 villagers. They listen to specialised programmes of AIR connected with life on farms and then discuss the various issues raised in broadcasts.

* * * *

Timely credit, combined with technical advice, has resulted in appreciable increases in agricultural production and farming incomes in 63 villages in the Mehrauli area and around Delhi. This was disclosed in an evaluation report on the project by the Indian Co-operative Union which has been running a rural development and credit project in the area for the last 22 months.

The report reveals that of the 1,420 farming families in the area nearly 80% have so far benefited from the credit facilities provided at 6¼% interest. Short-term loans were used by farmers for buying improved seeds and chemical fertilizers, while medium-term loans financed minor irrigation projects and the purchase of farm equipment. All loans were given on trust, taking into account only the productive capacity of the proposed farming operations and the potentialities of the farming family. The farmers of the project area have amply justified this trust. It is stated that 87 to 95% of all loans were repaid according to schedule. Failure to repay was usually due to wrong assessment, crop failure, death of cattle or illness in the family; the cases of wilful refusal to pay were very few indeed.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

The Kashmir Government announced that 511 panchayats would be set up in Jammu province under the Jammu and Kashmir Village Panchayats Act. Elections to the Panchayats are expected to be held within a few months. The setting up of 457 panchayats in Kashmir Province was announced in October last.

MADHYA PRADESH

Village Piparia Turkai in Patharia block in Damoh district has been adjudged the best village in Madhya Pradesh. At a presentation ceremony held recently Shri Ramnath Patel, the Sarpanch received on behalf of the village Government's merit award from the State Development Commissioner.

MYSORE

The Mysore Government will advance loans of the order of Rs. 13 crores to agriculturists during 1960-61. By the end of June, 60 there will be 2,000 service cooperatives in the State. The number of members of cooperative societies is expected to increase by 80,000 this year.

RAJASTHAN

The Rajasthan Government have decided that contract for work of estimated value of Rs. 20,000 could be given to labour cooperative societies without inviting tenders. A labour cooperative society submitting a tender could be entrusted with the work costing up to Rs. 1 lakh, at 5 per cent less than the lowest amount quoted in a tender for the work. The Government's decision is aimed at encouraging labour contract cooperative societies in the State.

PUNJAB

There are now 12,596 panchayats in Punjab covering 22,053 villages. Out of the 90,000 panchas, 10,511 belong to the Scheduled Castes and Backward Tribes. Four hundred and thirty panchayats have Harijan sarpanches. The panchayats constructed 8,477 miles of roads, 8,888 panchayat ghars and serais, opened 327 dispensaries and started 7,253 libraries. Over 5,500 of them have their own radio sets. The panchayats contributed voluntary labour worth Rs. 82 lakhs.

* * * *

The Punjab Government plans to spend Rs. 13 lakhs for strengthening and revitalizing small credit cooperative societies in the State during the current year. The existing units and 1,250 new societies proposed to be organized during the year will get Rs. 300 each as assistance.

MY PROBLEMS, MY WORRIES, MY FAILURES AND MY SUCCESSES

RAGHUBIR SAHAI M.P.

MY GREATEST worry for the last many years has been why despite the nobility in conception, comprehensiveness in scope of the C.D. Programme and the vast amount allocated for it both by the Centre and the States from year to year, the results are not as satisfactory as they ought to be.

I am not at all oblivious of what has been achieved so far. That is creditable enough. And those who have done it are entitled to our thanks.

But the expectations are very high and the need very great, though the task is stupendous indeed.

When I say that results have not been as satisfactory as they should be, I mean

(a) Phenomenal improvement in agricultural production in C.D. Blocks has not taken place.

(b) System of communications has not improved appreciably.

(c) And the general social outlook has also not undergone a marked change.

Now I can attribute this to the following main causes.

In the first place there has been defective Planning from the very beginning, atleast in regard to blocks taken up in 1952 and 1953. No systematic attempt had been made to understand the main problems of those areas and even if the problems were understood, no systematic efforts were made to solve them.

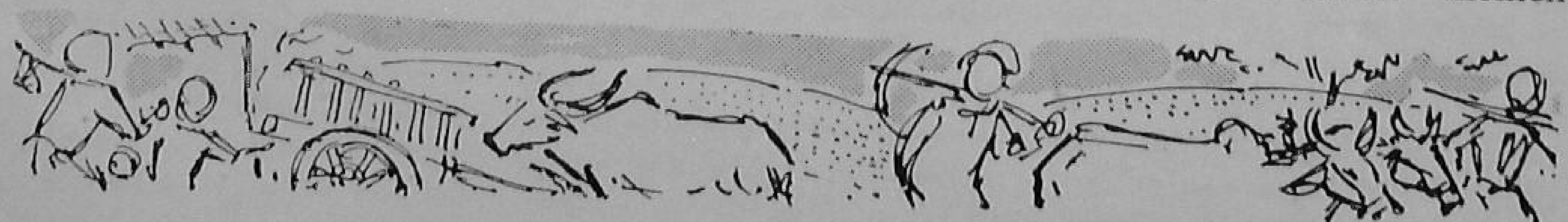
The problems of irrigation facilities, preventing vast areas from regular flood water, soil erosion and water-logging were not seriously taken up. Coordination between the Irrigation Department and the Department of C.D. was woefully lacking.

There was a lack of realisation on the part of those who had been put in charge of this work as to what Priorities meant.

Mostly the staff was not upto the mark and the check-up was as defective as it could be. Even with the available staff all that was possible has not been extracted.

Although one finds that at the Central level there is an anxiety to understand the real problem and to find a solution for it, that anxiety is lacking at the State-level. At the district level they are only concerned with following the instructions issued by the State in a more or less mechanical manner.

And the entire implementation of the C.D. Programme rests with the States. Centre can only lay down a Policy and guide. Our real Problem then is how to make States see eye to eye with the Centre. How to create a sense of urgency in them and how they can be made to implement the programme in its entirety. This can be possible only when the entire C.D. programme like the Centre is placed in charge of a separate Minister in each State, with ample faith in it and enough dynamism. He should have intimate knowledge of the working of the programme at the District, Block and Gaon Panchayat level, otherwise the programme will remain a purely official one, without the support of the people at large on whose cooperation depends a good deal. Even before a legislation contemplated on the lines of the Mehta Report is enacted in a State, as has already been done in Rajasthan and Andhra, a separate minister should have been appointed who alone could succeed in creating sufficient momen-



tum to let the movement go with efficiency and speed.

Among the worries are whether in face of the widespread illiteracy in the rural areas, where people are torn with dissensions, factionalism, casteism, where self-interest reigns supreme and a spirit to work for the Community is almost conspicuous by its absence, and public money is not considered something sacred to be spent with care, the institution of Panchayat Raj can be made a success within a reasonable distance of time.

Law and order situation specially in the rural areas is a serious problem and it is for us to see whether by laying stress on raising the economic condition of the people alone we are in any way making them more law abiding and less prone to unsocial activities.

As a matter of fact success of development activities should mean considerable reduction in the incidence of crime, litigation and unsocial activities and a greater demand for spread of education. So can also be said about Cooperative Movement, Service Cooperatives, and Cooperative Farming.

Both Panchayat Raj and Cooperative movement require selfless workers, official as well as non-official, fully trained and alive to their sense of responsibility and with an urge to make them a success. The Cooperative Law, as it stands today, stands in need of overhauling from top to bottom for it is so full of checks and counter, checks and bristles with suspicion of non-officials.

While on the one hand we find that innumerable difficuties are placed in the way of applicants getting loans and grants for the construction of masonry wells for Irrigation and for the purchase of cattle by Revenue Authorities, we also find that even after a drinking water well has been completed, the Government share of the money is not handed over to the applicants, which adds to their dis-satisfaction.

The Block authorities also in many cases have to work under difficult circumstances. Instead of a readiness on the part of the village people to cooperate with them and implement the programme, they would be more anxious to exploit them to serve their selfish ends and to create difficulties, by threatening them and obstructing them at each and every step. With all the added responsibilities attached to a B.D.O., I am afraid he lacks that prestige and authority which alone can make a greater success of him.

With regard to Failures, apart from a number of expectations not being fulfilled day in and day out, what gives greater sense of defeatism is the fact that many a time there is no response to valuable suggestions at the State level and they are definitely misunderstood. On the other hand I should think, every honest and sincere suggestion coming from what-so-ever quarter it may be towards the furtherance of the programme, should not only be welcomed but considered on its merits. This is a dangerous attitude which oftentimes State Governments are likely to assume and is least conducive to development work.

Among my Successes I can claim a measure of confidence in the village people about my bona fides. They have the knack to distinguish between a friend of the movement and its opponent. They would give me a patient hearing and even when I adopt a purely critical attitude and blame them for so many acts of omission and commission, they would not misunderstand me. Herein lies my intrinsic strength and a realisation that my sustained efforts and interest in the programme have not been wasted.

THE ROLE OF NON-OFFICIALS

B. MEHTA

WHILE BRIEFLY referring to the roles of different functionaries at various levels, we cannot forget to see what role the non-officials at different levels have to play. In fact their role is the most important, and unless they have a clear realisation of it, all this change will have lost its essence. For example, the Panchas and the Sarpanchas have to understand that 'Lok' means the people, the people including the last man in the last line also. 'Loktantra' will be involving all others too besides those in the first row. The Government official could not accomplish this because of a variety of reasons. The Panch or the Sarpanch can do this because of his localised sphere of work. The role of the Panch or the Sarpanch will be to contact and consult everyone while planning for the community welfare, and not merely to be satisfied with the contribution of his few group associates. Once elected, he represents the entire population, and he has to unreservedly seek the opinion of all and everyone. The man who has never heard his own voice echoing in the decisions for community welfare, whose wisdom and experience have till now been allowed to rust within himself, should now be persuaded to enrich the collective wisdom and experience of the community and to strengthen the collective effort to forge ahead towards progress. There is no other justification for the change except that it would make democracy more meaningful to the common villager, and the extent of realisation of this would mostly depend on the extent to which all those in the back rows in the villages are not only made co-sharers in the benefits coming out of the leaders' decisions but also cosharer in the informal process of taking those decisions. The representatives of the people should be able to see the total personality of the village reflected in the plans they are to execute. They have their roles not only as members of Panchayat Samitis and Panchayats, but as leaders of men. They being nearer the people, their roles as leaders in social and moral life of the community is of immense importance. One showing moral lapses in his character will not be able to carry the community. Rural mind looks for example for something virtuous and valuable in a man's behaviour and conduct for acceptance as a leader, and unless the Panch or the Sarpanch acquires this leadership of his people, the other one acquired through the ballot box alone may not be of much importance.

The members of the Zila are elder statesmen in relation to the members of Panchayat Samitis and Panchayats, and have as such to help and guide the younger ones Parishad at the district level in their functions, and advise them in their decisions. It will be disastrous if those functioning at the higher level thought the ones lower below as their subordinates. Each body (and, therefore, its members) has its own importance at its own level. The role of the member of the Zila Parishad will be mainly advisory and they should develop by observation, study and discussion their personality as advisers.

The member of the State Legislature has to remain so occupied with thinking of legislation on policies, that he will not have much time left for attending to the business by bodies at the lower levels. So long he had had to turn to smaller matters even at the lower level, mainly because there was no democratic organisation with functional efficiency at those levels. With the Panchayat Samitis coming and his worry ending, he will be able to concentrate more on his role as a legislator. Public opinion will have a chance to reflect through the Samitis and Zila Parishads and provide to the legislator a sufficiently wide base for formulating policies connected with the welfare and progress of the people. He has to resist the temptation of influencing decisions of the lower bodies by his vaster personality. For the sake of their growth, initiative has to be left to them.

Very little attention has so far been given to the role of the social worker. It is difficult also to think in very precise terms the role of a worker generally engaged in activities of community welfare. By social worker is meant the non-professional social worker, one who is engaged voluntarily in an independent capacity or as a representative of a voluntary social life. By not giving recognition to these workers here and there, and thus failing to coordinate their effort with those of official organisations, we do not know how much we have lost in terms of progress. The role of a social worker is, by and large, to introduce progressive thinking among the people and to popularise changes in social behaviour so that it is in consonance with the impact of new forces. This does not exclude the rehabilitation of certain fundamental virtues without which all change will be meaningless. Now such workers have to be recognised and their role in the building up of the new social pattern has to be strengthened.

It is not possible to refer to the roles of many of us. Many categories, both of officials and non-officials, have had to be left out. But this should leave us in no confusion about the main issue. The heads of the various departments of the Government at the State and district levels have now onwards to play their role mostly as advisers to the functionaries down in their respective lines. They have to ensure that these functionaries make available their technical advice with all sincerity and in abundant measure to the representative of the people and their organisations.

The Government servants at the block or village level have to work as advisers and guides to the people's organisations in the planning and execution of programmes by them. And the entire approach at all levels has to be educative and one that is conducive to the growth of those in the lower reaches. The "command and obey" element has to be gradually eschewed out of the approach by the entire hierarchy of officials from top downwards. Similarly the non-official's approach as to be one of securing agreed decisions at all levels and of incorporating the contribution of the far-flung and the neglected in as large a measure as possible not only in the execution but also in the planning of local programmes. Towards the official, who is now, in very significant terms, the people's servant, they have to adopt a cooperative approach so that he gives the best in him to make rapid progress a practical reality.

The villager still essentially strong in his wisdom and his faith in human virtues, and rich in cultural values of life, can be helped to cast off the seemingly strong shell of conservatism and immobility, only if we all accept our new roles in their ultimate significance, and once again the village life in India can be moulded according to Gandhiji's dream.

A VILLAGE WOMAN'S WISH

(On hearing of Gram Sevikas)

They call me backward, stupid, slow,
But, oh, I long to know.
I am a village woman low,
But yet my heart's aglow.

There's such a stirring here of late—
The men can scarcely wait
To try new ways to cultivate—
To better their estate.

The village men chat in the street
Or in panchayat meet.
And I would listen at their feet—
If granted such a seat.

But I'm a woman, stupid, old,
No status I can hold.
To stir beyond my own small fold
Would surely be too bold.

Still, there's a village here hard by—
Unless the gossips lie—
Where even women such as I
Can question how and why.

And there's woman leader there
Who really seems to care
How women in the village fare,
And what they have to bare.

She says, or so they say, at least.
That women make the feast,
And sow the crop, and tend the beast,
And rear the child, not least.

She says the one who does these things,
To her the future clings,
She fortune or misfortune brings,
And wields more power than kings.

But 'tis a dreadful thing, if so,
That I should be so stupid, slow,
So much depends on how I go,
Dear God, I want to know.

I want to feed my children right,
And make my cottage bright;
I would know how to use my might
To be a shining light.

I want to learn to tend the field
To bring a higher yield.
I want to see my children healed—
If I such power can wield.

I want to fill my house with cheer
And still my children's fear.
And it could help my husband, dear,
If all's true that I hear.

My heart's aglow with great desire—
My feet may go in mire
As my steps ply 'tween hut and byre—
But, oh, my heart's afire.

HELEN B. BUTT

LETTERS

Some Plain Speaking

Sir,

Personal contact has been recognised as the most effective medium in Extension Education. The importance of touring and the minimum number of days to be spent outside the Headquarter has been emphasised in circulars issued from time to time. But these instructions have largely remained confined to the circulars or Manuals and Guides and have been seldom followed in practice. I hope I shall not be misunderstood if I do some plain-speaking on the subject. Most of our touring staff fill in their tour diaries more to please the boss than to serve the cause. If, for instance, they visit four or five villages in a day, they generally show in the diary as having visited the village at the rate of one per day. Enforcement of disciplinary action or tightening of the organisational machinery will hardly bring about any improvement in the existing situation. Much depends on the personal example that the officer in charge sets before his subordinates. On my transfer to the present Block, I was confronted with a similar situation. Without depending on the Block jeep, which is usually out of order, I started extensive touring on bicycle and also on foot. This had the desired effect. Systematic and extensive touring in the area cannot fail to produce healthy results.

5-6-60 Yours etc.,
Block Lahar, *S. A. Joshi*
Distt. Bhind, M.P. *B.D.O.*

A Gram Sevak Thinks Aloud

Sir,

I am a poor Gram Sevak. I have worked in various Blocks during the last six years. I have a good record of service of which I am proud. I am working hard at the lowest level of the Community Development programme. Toiling hard day and night with the utmost zeal and enthusiasm I have a golden dream of my own that one day, I shall be working out the plan at the level of the Block Development officer.

It is assumed that a Gram Sevak is the builder of our nation, a friend and a guide to the villagers, the best agent of all the departments. He is supposed to be the backbone of the community development plan. In the words of Shri S. K. Dey, Union Minister for Community Development, "a Gram Sevak is the collector -*cum*- Development Commissioner in his jurisdiction."

When I think of myself of what I do daily, I am rather proud of myself. I work hard on the fields showing the cultivators the improved agricultural practices, introducing to them improved seeds and fertilisers. Agriculture being the main problem of the country today I concentrate my efforts in the direction of producing more foodgrains. I also deal with the social aspect of the village life. I organise youth clubs and play with the youth. I organise Bhajan Mandals and sing and dance to the tune of the Tabla. I organise Farmers' unions and guide them. I organise Mahila Mandals and work for them. I hold villagers' meetings and solve their problems. I prepare them for leadership and inculcate in them the spirit of friendship and reasonable understanding. I always try to root out the evil customs and habits prevailing in the villages. I endeavour to remove ignorance, untouchability and illiteracy from them. Indeed I put out the best in me to create civilised citizens for the Indian Republic.

I do this and much more out of a sense of duty for which I am paid. But I have also a passion for it. I have a keen desire to serve my country and to build my nation so as to bring it to the level of the most civilised and advanced countries of the world. I am most anxious to raise the standard of living of the villagers who have been ground down by poverty for the last so many centuries. And so I toil hard day and night for the good of the nation.

(Continued on page 14)

THE STORY OF PREM RAJ

VIDUR

A SULTRY morning in the month of June found me speeding in a jeep to a small village Sungarpur, 13 miles north west of Delhi. After covering 10 miles on the Grand Trunk Road, we branched off on a pucca road to Bakhtawarpur 3 miles ahead. As we reached Bakhtawarpur, the sun had already gone up and though not right on the head, it was hot enough to make us perspire and feel uncomfortable in the dusty 'loo' all around. From Bakhtawarpur to Sungarpur, a distance of about 2 miles was a dusty track interspersed with field channels that had made it unfit even for a jeep to move along. So we covered this last leg of our journey on foot. Thirsty and exhausted, we reached the village just before midday. I was visiting the village after a lapse of 6 years since the Community Development work has begun. I was looking forward to find a lot of change in the village. But there was nothing of the kind, the same old mud houses with the exception of one or two new pucca ones, the same dirty and dusty lanes. Even the sight of the fields and the wastelands was more bleak and devoid of bushes and trees than ever before. In vain did my eyes try to locate the Community Centre building which had once been the pride of the village and a monument to their 'Shramdan'. Where had it vanished like an enchanted castle ? I could not believe my eyes ! I sat on a charpoy musing over these mysterious developments when I saw before me the familiar smiling face of Prem Raj, perspiring under a heavy load of grass. After placing the bundle of grass before the horse, Prem Raj came up to me and greeted me with his usual cordiality. I had known him as the most enthusiastic young man on this side of the rural area known as 'Khadar' while I served as the first Project Executive Officer of Alipur Block. It did not take me long to spot him out as one of the few persons who delight in rendering selfless service to the community and the people around. Though illiterate, he had proved himself to be the pioneer in adopting improved farming practices on his own fields and had been responsible for introducing several development schemes in the village and had organised several 'Shramdan' drives.

Prem Raj was an average farmer and because of his having adopted better farming practices, I looked forward to finding him a well-to-do and prosperous Zamindar after these six years. However, my hopes were falsified by his none-too-happy reply to my routine query, "How do you do these days ?" His reply was : "Sab chalta hai ji". But the ill-fed condition of the horse, his own tattered garments and the plaster falling off from the walls of the house—all these conspired to tell me a sordid story and to conclude that all was not well. My further probings and the heart-to-heart talk we had in the matter revealed to me that Prem Raj had suffered terribly as a result of the cruelties of both nature as well as man. He narrated to me how as a result of the unprecedented floods in the Jamuna and the consequent deflection in its flow, forty-five out of sixty acres of his land had been sliced away. This was the most fertile land he owned and on this he used to grow vegetables, potatoes, sugarcane and other cash crops. The remaining land, he said, grew hardly enough wheat for the family. As if this natural calamity was not enough, rinderpest took toll of the lives of 5 buffaloes and 4 bullocks, the following year. It meant a loss of about Rs. 5,000 and caused a deep dent in his crippling financial position. Women are particularly fond of the cattle. To Prem Raj's wife, the blow was so unbearable that she lost her mental balance.

While Prem Raj continued his tale of woe, his eyes suddenly became moistened and he remarked, "Who can defy the wrath of Providence ? Whether one likes it or not, it has to be borne meekly. But man's selfishness and ingratitude are worse and more detestable." Then he continued after a long pause :

"I had been persuaded by some friends to supply milk to a Milk Cooperative Society. I continued to supply 5 mds. of milk every day to this society for some years. This society has now become defunct and I have suffered a loss of about Rs. 5,000." Another Service Cooperative society swindled me of Rs. 1,500 by offering to sell fertilisers which it never did. "Why, you can bring the miscreants to book under the cooperative laws," I remarked. He said, "Ah! This is the difficulty. I had been made to sign a document the contents of which I could not read myself. Later on I came to know that I had signed for just one truck of fertilisers and not four for which I had paid the money." I retorted, "So, you should now be cursing these cooperative societies and dreading them as fire." "No", he replied immediately, "I have still faith in the cooperatives. These have done and are still doing a lot of good work in our villages. The fault was mine that I signed a document without getting it read by someone. No doubt, some of my best and trusted friends have played false with me. But that does not mean all persons are like that. There are good and honest men also in our societies which are doing very well."

SPIRIT UNDAUNTED

"Prem Raj", I interrupted, "you have suffered a loss of nearly 12,000 rupees during the last few years and have been reduced to poverty. Worst of all, from a fairly big peasant proprietor owning 60 acres of land, you have now been made a petty farmer having 15 acres only. Thus all prospects of your ever becoming as rich as you were in the past, are gone for ever. Do you still retain the same fire of social service as before?" Prem Raj's face wore a grim appearance, and without a moment's hesitation, he said, "Why, I continue to take equal if not more interest. The people have elected me unanimously as their Sarpanch. Although I did not want to be burdened with this responsibility, yet now that they have elected me how can I shirk my duty?" After some pause he added, "It is not my poverty but a natural catastrophe that overtook us a few years ago that thwarted our constructive efforts and tended to dampen our spirits. However, thank God, we have survived that ordeal too and have not turned our backs on the road to development." "You mean the ———?" I asked inquisitively. "Yes, it was a high flood in the Jamuna that submerged our village and the neighbouring areas. All the good work that we had done in our village,—the paved streets, the Community Centre, the drinking water well and other improvements effected in individual houses which had earned the first position for our village in the State were all washed away at one sweep of the onrushing waters of the Jamuna." I interrupted: "What did you do to meet the challenge?" "We did not lose heart", he said, "and after a good deal of our lands and homes had been sliced away, we decided to build a new model village at a suitable site a few miles away. The lay-out plan of the village was supplied to us by the Block authorities and we started building houses for ourselves. We had been assured house-building loans by the authorities but red-tapism has not allowed the money to be sanctioned to us till today even after a lapse of two years." I inquired, "As a Sarpanch, have you any plans for the future development of the villages you represent." He replied, "Yes, I want to construct a drinking water well and a school building in the new village. We also propose to help the construction of a Gurdwara in Jhangola village where some Sikhs have settled. In order to strengthen the financial position of the Panchayat, I have been trying hard for over a year to get a license for quarrying Jamuna Sand. But the authorities have paid no heed so far. Is it not an irony that whereas big contractors can easily get licenses for quarrying Jamuna Sand, a Panchayat can't get it?" I could not but agree with him.

We had been talking for hours now and so finally I took leave of him. The meeting that day had left a deep impression on me. The character of Prem Raj had risen considerably higher in my eyes. I could not but admire the courage and faith with which he carried the cross of Panchayati Raj in spite of all odds.

THE GADAG COOPERATIVE MARKETING SOCIETY

MARKETING of agricultural products on cooperative lines can be a source of great economic benefit to the agriculturists. This fact has been amply demonstrated by the remarkable performance of the Gadag Cooperative Cotton Sale Society working since 1917. The usual benefits accruing from the elimination of brokers, mal-practices of Mandi markets and money lenders, etc., have of course been ensured to the cotton producers of the Gadag area. In addition, a comprehensive developmental programme for the scientific production of cotton has been taken up by this society.

The society is working as the agent of the Government in supplying pedigree cotton seed to the agriculturists. The cotton seed is purchased by the society in auction sales. Seeds which are found fit for sowing purposes and which are recommended by the Cotton Superintendent only are supplied to the agriculturists. For this purpose depots have been opened in important centres in Gadag Taluka and in adjoining areas. This very essential factor in the production of good quality cotton has been very much appreciated by the agriculturists. In coordination with the Agriculture Department, the Society organises campaigns for clearing fields of weeds and off-type plants. The Agriculture Department subsidises this programme and also provides the necessary technical guidance. As soon as the cotton is brought to the society, it is graded with the help of the cotton staff of the Agriculture Department. Grading of cotton ensures a uniform quality to all purchasers and they are certain of the quality of the product for which they bid in auctions. Conditions in the market in general are very different from this, as no proper grading is done there. On the other hand, the wholesale dealers generally try to palm off inferior quality goods for the price of better quality stuff.

The main business of the Society is to arrange for the sale of cotton and ground-nut produced by its members. After grading is done the produce is arranged in lots according to their classification. A list of buyers who are approved by the Managing Committee of the Society is drawn up and each of the buyer is furnished with the information regarding different lots of graded cotton and ground-nuts before auction sale takes place.

The members receive as advance payment 75% of the price of cotton and groundnut brought by them on the strength of the receipts of warehouses. The remaining payment is made after the sale has been effected. Members of the society are also given advance loans on the pledge of the Warehouse receipts at a very cheap rate of 5½% interest. Even the State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank Ltd. and the Canara Industrial and Banking Syndicate have agreed to advance loans to the Gadag Cotton Sale Society at 4½% on the basis of Warehouse receipts held by it.

Cotton and ground-nut are sold by open auction in the "sale hall" of the society every fortnight during the season. This system of open auction ensures the maximum price to the members. In 1958-59 the maximum bazar rate for cotton was Rs. 615 per *Nag* while at the auction sales of the society the maximum rate was Rs. 740. Similarly the minimum bazar rate was Rs. 610 while the society rate was Rs. 675. The 'open' system is found very convenient by the buyers as well since they are able to buy cotton of standard grades in big lots at one time. In the off-season, cotton is sold by private treaty some times. The success of auction sales largely depends upon the high standard of grading carried out by the Agriculture Department. In the year 1958-59, of the total arrivals of cotton in the Gadag market (76,083 Docras) 56.7% was sold through the Gadag Cotton Sale Society (43,092 Docras). This clearly indicates the loyalty which the agriculturists of the area have towards this society.

Realising the need for an open godown the construction of a building measuring

70,000 sq. feet has been undertaken. This will be in addition to four other godowns that the society already owns. The society has been providing the right type of incentives to its members by declaring 6¼% dividends to the shareholders. The bonus of Re. 1 per Docra of cotton and 12 nP per bag of ground nut are also given to the members selling their products through the society.

Every year 5 individual members and 5 society members who market the largest quantity of their produce through the society are awarded medals and merit certificates by the society.

During the year 1958-59, this society earned a net profit of Rs. 2,16,531. It has a membership of 3,438 individuals and 36 cooperative societies. The members have raised a share capital of Rs. 1,11,000 and the Government contributed to the share capital to the extent of Rs. 50,000 in addition. This society continues to be classified as 'A' Class society by the auditors every year. It has also maintained a high cooperative character since all the elections of the Board of Directors have been unanimous for quite sometime. This feature has helped the society to maintain a unique team spirit and harmony in its working. It has maintained a high standard of honesty and integrity resulting in efficiency of the first order. The Board of Directors meets twice or thrice every month as the business of the society demands.

A special feature introduced by the society this year is the supply of the famous Laxmi cotton seeds to various States in India. There was a very great demand for these seeds from different States and on the recommendation of the Agriculture Department, 85,998 bags were purchased by the society and supplied to them. On this account alone the society made a profit of Rs. 70,800. The Mysore Government made this society the wholesale and retail licensee for chemical fertilizers like ammonium sulphate, superphosphate and urea. Total purchases of these fertilizers during 1958-59 was for Rs. 1,43,654 from which the society earned a profit of Rs. 4,076.

Arrangements have been made by the society for ginning and pressing of the members' cotton at the Hubli Ginning and Pressing Factory. For this work the society charges a commission from the members and during 1958-59 it earned a profit of Rs. 5,495.

LETTERS

(Continued from page 10)

A man is a man after all. When the self, which thinks of betterment of others is overcome by the thought of self-betterment, I am plunged deep in thinking about the dark and futile future of my own. I wonder how every department is ready to extract work from me but when the time of promotion comes, it promotes its own persons and I being recruited from the open market, am left utterly neglected. Though sad and frustrated in so far as my stand-still position is concerned, I am glad, rather overjoyed to see that my country is prospering and going forward. I am still working with utmost honesty, zeal and sincerity at the lowest possible level without regret. What gives me solace is that people like me and the officers appreciate my work. And above all, my conscience is satisfied that I am playing no mean role in this big drama of the development of our country.

Yours etc.,
Prabhakar M. Khadi,
Gram Sevak.

P.E.B. Jalna,
Dist. Aurangabad,
Maharashtra

(In our opinion this letter typifies the general background against which our Gram Sevaks function from day to day. Their problems are of a very novel kind requiring special consideration.—Ed.)

VILLAGE PRODUCTION PLAN

THE VILLAGE plan is a broad *plan* covering the village as a whole. It would depend on (i) local effort of the individual or the community; and (ii) supplies and services obtained from outside. There has been a tendency in some places to place too much reliance on the latter and not to exploit the former to the maximum extent. The supplies and services that can be obtained or provided from outside are limited. In preparing the plan, this limitation must be kept in mind and efforts made to develop local resources to the maximum extent. The Block team has the responsibility in this respect of indicating to the villages the manner in which local resources can be developed to improve production.

The main elements to be considered in the agricultural production plan at the village level are:

1. full utilisation of irrigation facilities, including maintenance of field channels in good condition by the beneficiaries, repair and maintenance of Community irrigation works and economy in the use of water;

2. increase in the area under multiple cropping;

3. multiplication in the village of improved seed and its distribution to all cultivators;

4. supply of fertilisers;

5. programme for composting and green manures;

6. adoption of improved agricultural practices, *e.g.*, soil conservation, contour-bunding, dry farming, drainage, land reclamation, plant protection etc.;

7. programme for new minor irrigation works to be undertaken in the village, both through community participation and on an individual basis;

8. programme for the introduction of improved agricultural implements;

9. programme for increasing production of vegetables and fruits;

10. programme for development of poultry, fish and dairy product;

11. Animal Husbandry, *e.g.*, supply and maintenance of stud bulls, establishment of Artificial Insemination Centres and castration of scrub bulls etc.; and

12. programme for the development of the village fuel plantations and pastures.

Each year early in January a preliminary estimate of the resources which would be available to the block from outside such as fertilizers, seeds, credit, etc. should be given to each block by the Head of the Department concerned. The Block authorities should, in the meanwhile, collect, where they have not already done so, basic data for every village, *i.e.*, number of families, area, etc. On the basis of this information and a rough knowledge of supplies which would be available from outside, the Panchayat Samiti (or B.D.C.) should meet and discuss the broad outline of the village plans. At these meetings, the Sarpanches who will have knowledge of local conditions must necessarily be present; and they may bring with them local leaders like Gram Sahayaks, who may be of assistance in the preparation of the village plans. It is these persons who will be able to give an idea of the local resources that are, or can be made, available. As a result of the discussions at such a meeting, a fairly accurate outline of the plan of production for the block and preliminary outlines for individual village plans can be drawn up. This work should normally be over by the end of March.

With this broad outline, the Panchayat will call a general meeting of the Gaon Sabha to which all the heads of families, particularly of the cultivating classes, office bearers and representatives of cooperatives and extension workers should be invited for the discussion of the outline of the village plan. In the meeting, while no attempt need be made to draw any individual family plan at this stage, the tasks that will have to be performed by different persons or groups in order to implement the village plan and a broad time schedule for carrying out these should be worked out. This meeting should also work out suitable methods for implementing the programme so decided by

making individual members of the Panchayat etc. responsible for the performance of specific items of work or for specific areas in the village. This work should be completed by about 15th May, *i.e.*, generally a month in advance of the commencement of the Agricultural season. Each State will have to fix the date.

In the preparation of the village production plan, the village panchayat and the village cooperative both have an important role to play. The panchayat is in the best position to visualise the village production plan as a whole and, in particular, to arrange, with the consent of individual villagers secured in the course of discussions in the Gaon Sabha, the execution of programmes which call for effort on the part of the entire village community, or a group of villagers or individuals. On the other hand, it will be the responsibility of the village cooperative to provide the specific assistance required by individual cultivators by way of credit and supplies. The scope of cooperative credit will become progressively larger since the policy is to channel Taccavi loans and other Government assistance, as far as possible, through cooperatives. Secondly, as the membership of the village cooperative becomes more broad-based and comes to include all cultivators in a village, its responsibilities and those of the panchayat for the village production plan will become more fully integrated. In the meanwhile, however, while institutional credit can only be given by the cooperative to its members, the programme must ensure that supplies are available to members and non-members alike.

Thus, close collaboration between the panchayat and the cooperative is necessary in the drawing up of the village plan. But the village panchayat must accept primary responsibility for the drawing up of the village production plan in close association with the village cooperative. The scope of planning will increase as the efficiency of the panchayats and cooperatives develop in this field of activity.

Within the general production plan framed by the panchayat in collaboration with the village cooperative, the latter will prepare its plan for assisting individual cultivators. Thus, the preparation by the village cooperative of agricultural plans for individual families will mean, in essence, the more effective organisation of the working of the primary cooperative so that its assistance becomes available progressively to all the cultivators in the village who need it.

The Block Samiti will consolidate the village plans and include items for which the Block Samiti itself may be responsible and then prepare the final block plan. Having regard to the information already indicated to the Districts/Blocks earlier, the Block and village plans should not normally require any major revision when the State budget is finally passed. Any changes deemed necessary by later developments will have to be carried out by the authorities responsible for the preparation of the plan, *i.e.*, the Panchayat, the Block Samiti, as the case may be.

The block and village Plans so framed should form the basis for implementation. The Block and Panchayat authorities and the extension staff will have to keep watch and assist in the implementation. Even though responsibility will primarily be that of the Panchayat, the Extension Staff would have to play an important role particularly in ensuring that services and supplies are made available as agreed to and on time.

In the following years, where the plan for the next year is being prepared, appropriate columns in the village plans which indicate the actual inputs and targets achieved, would also need to be filled in. This would enable examination of how the plan was actually implemented, whether there was adequate and timely supply of the credit, funds, fertilizers, seeds, from outside or not and whether the cultivator himself put in his own contribution as he had undertaken. The result of such a review, at the time of the preparation of the succeeding years' annual plan, would help in highlighting the deficiencies and would also enable corrective action to be taken for the following year.

Hygienic water-seal latrines are increasingly finding favour with our villagers particularly those residing in the Block areas. One such latrine is being fitted up in a villager's compound in the Baruipur Block of 24-Parganas District, West Bengal.

Irrigation in hilly regions is a difficult problem. But our farmers are skilled enough to overcome it. They use hollowed trunks of trees to pipe water across gullies and deep ravines to their fields, which otherwise would have remained barren.

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